



November 2011

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PAID & VOLUNTEER STAFF OF RAILTOWN 1897 STATE HISTORIC PARK

Upcoming Events

November 3

Ladies Luncheon 11:30
At Morelia's Mexican
Restaurant

November 8

All Hands Meeting
Santa's Starlight
Express 1pm

November 12 & 13

Decorating the Christ-
mas and Santa's Star-
light trains 9am until 4pm

November 19 & 20

Volunteers needed to
help decorate the
Santa's Starlight and
Christmas trains 9am-
At 5:30pm Dress
Rehearsal Train ride

November 24

Park Closed for
Thanksgiving

November 25 & 26

Santa's Starlight
Express trains @ 5:30
and 7pm w/Michael
Cowley as Santa
Starlight Serenaders
On the platform
On board entertainers
Ron Delacy, Keith
Keenom

November 25, 26 & 27

Santa trains w/Michael
Cowley & Dave
Rainwater

December 1

Annual Railtown Ladies
Ornament exchange
And Potluck

December 17 & 18

Santa trains w/Michael
Cowley & Dave Rainwater

December 18

Annual volunteer
After glow Christmas
party 5:30pm
at the Senior Center on
Greenley Road
Funny "White Elephant
Gift Exchange"

A Message From The Superintendent

The season is winding down, and it just seems like it started! This has really been an outstanding year for Railtown. Our train revenue, visitation and store revenue are all up, and as you know, we've been receiving lots of kudos from visitors for our great service and a fun experience. I've been most proud of the really positive and public-oriented attitudes displayed by all of our staff and volunteers. I believe that this focus on the visitor is what really keeps them coming back.

As you probably know by now, our membership has been holding steady at around 1,300 members. Even under the threat of closure, people keep joining up. These members are very important to us. Not only do they bring in revenue, but members tend to form stronger relationships with the park, and these days, we need all the friends we can get. The October 8th member appreciation day was a great success—we had lots of happy people and a lot of fun on our evening trains. A big Thank You to all of you who helped make this a success.

Now for the rest of the season—we are planning our popular Santa Trains, and Santa's Starlight Express trains. There are lots of opportunities to pitch in, either before, after, or during. We hope you'll join us. And, finally, don't forget the best party of the year—the "after" party. After the last train of the season, that is. On December 18th at 5:30, join us at the Senior Center in Sonora, and don't forget to bring your wackiest white elephant gift for the gift game. Just wait until you see what I'm bringing!

See you then,
Kim

All Hands Meeting

Santa's Starlight Express is our next big event on Thanksgiving weekend. Tickets are selling and we are anticipating a large turn out this year. Please join us on Tuesday, November 8th at 1pm for an all hands meeting. We will be discussing and planning for the Starlight Express trains and if you have concerns, issues or comments please attend! Also a dress rehearsal run will take place Sunday, November 20th at 5:30pm. We'll go over the logistics of serving hot chocolate and refreshments on board. We're asking if possible for all crew, car hosts and staff to be present, as we rehearse for these trains. This will be our 3rd year for this event, which has been tremendously successful!





A Little Known Bit of Railroad History

If you were in the market for a watch in 1880, would you know where to get one? You would go to a store, right? Well, of course you could do that, but if you wanted one that was cheaper and a bit better than most of the store watches, you went to the train station! Sound a bit funny? Well, for about 500 towns across the northern United States, that's where the best watches were found. Why were the best watches found at the train station? The railroad company wasn't selling the watches, not at all. The telegraph operator was. Most of the time the telegraph operator was located in the railroad station because the telegraph lines followed the railroad tracks from town to town. It was usually

the shortest distance and the right-of-ways had already been secured for the rail line. Most of the station agents were also skilled telegraph operators and that was the primary way they communicated with the railroad. They would know when trains left the previous station and when they were due at their next station. And it was the telegraph operator who had the watches. As a matter of fact they sold more of them than almost all the stores combined for a period of about 9 years.

This was all arranged by "Richard", who was a telegraph operator himself. He was on duty in the North Redwood, Minnesota train station one day when a load of watches arrived from the east. It was a huge crate of pocket watches. No one ever came to claim them. So Richard sent a telegram to the manufacturer and asked them what they wanted to do with the watches. The manufacturer didn't want to pay the freight back, so they wired Richard to see if he could sell them. So Richard did. He sent a wire to every agent in the system asking them if they wanted a cheap, but good, pocket watch. He sold the entire case in less than two days and at a handsome profit.

That started it all. He ordered more watches from the watch company and encouraged the telegraph operators to set up a display case in the station offering high quality watches for a cheap price to all the travelers. It worked! It didn't take long for the word to spread and, before long, people other than travelers came to the train station to buy watches. Richard became so busy that he had to hire a professional watch maker to help him with the orders. That was Alvah. And the rest is history as they say. The business took off and soon expanded to many other lines of dry goods. Richard and Alvah left the train station and moved their company to Chicago -- and it's still there. IT'S A LITTLE KNOWN FACT that for a while in the 1880's, the biggest watch retailer in the country was at the train station. It all started with a telegraph operator: Richard Sears and his partner Alvah Roebuck! (from Wikipedia) (Thanks to Dave Connery who submitted this interesting article.)

Annual Railtown Ladies Christmas Party & Ornament Exchange

It's time again for the annual potluck and Christmas ornament exchange at Wilma Bushart's house. Bring a nice dish and a unique ornament to exchange and join the fun. Please RSVP Wilma at 19044 Apple Valley Drive, Sonora 95370 or call 588-9833.

Has Anyone Seen John?

Has anyone seen the whereabouts of the John Wayne cut out poster? Please return it to the office if possible.

New Mother Lode Storytelling Guild

Local renowned story teller BZ Smith is hosting a new group to encourage storytellers. It's a great opportunity to improve your skills and meet other like minded individuals. They will be meeting on the 3rd Saturday of each month at the Angels Camp Mercantile from 4 to 6pm.



Volunteer of The Month- Jim Mullin

In Memory

We are very saddened to report the passing of our good friend and long-time volunteer Jim Mullin. Jim passed sometime late last week due to a medical complication still to be determined. He was signed up to be Tour Guide last Sunday. When he didn't show, concerned volunteers contacted the Sheriff's department, who then found him at his home. I had just interviewed Jim to be our Volunteer of The Month for this November issue. He was reluctant to accept any honor for himself, saying there were many others who deserved more recognition. But I know I speak for all of us, in that Jim deserved plenty of honor and respect for his service and dedication to Railtown. Getting him to open up about any of his private life was difficult enough, for he loved his privacy and the solitude of his home in the mountains near Pinecrest. His favorite activities were kayaking and hiking.

Jim gave excellent tours to our park visitors each Sunday throughout our operating season. Jim is originally from southern California. He graduated from Glendora High in 1960 and received his degree in forestry from Humboldt State University. He retired after 30 years of dedicated service with the US Forest Service. He joined Railtown in 1998 and worked as a Tour Guide ever since. Jim gave a 'textbook' tour to park visitors and helped instruct many new volunteers interested in guiding. When asked what he liked most about Railtown, "I love the people and the interesting things the Roundhouse offers." A memorial service and potluck reception will be held at Pinecrest on Saturday, November 12th at 2pm. Jim's sister Joan has asked if friends spoke about the fun times and spoke or read humorous stories at the service. Send cards to: Joan & Bob Alispones 513 Heritage Trace, Lebanon, Ohio 45036



October Wrap Up

Thanks to everyone who pitched in during October. We had a great month, XX riders, many of whom enjoyed a pumpkin with their ride, and great October weather. It was a great way to go out for the season.

We'd also like to call out the efforts of some of our volunteers— Laverne for coordinating the pumpkin donation, Gary Hosman for soliciting a lumber discount from SPI (and thanks to SPI!), David Ethier, Greg Peterson for working on the steam generator on the 613, Jerry Tannhauser for coordinating wood chipping, Rob Buchanan, the Sacramento MOW crew and our own volunteers who did track work this month, and all of you who pitched in and did what was needed.



Thanks to Tom Hull, Laverne Coon, Jim Mullin, Phil Hard, Rich Davilla, Carol Mabe, Jessica Davilla and Delfina Davilla our pumpkin gatherers this year!



RAILTOWN 1897
State Historic Park

PO Box 1250

Jamestown, CA 95327

Return Service Requested



TO:

Depot Store- (209) 984-3953

Docent Hotline- (209) 984-4408

Docent Site- <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>

Railtown Blog- www.railtown1897.wordpress.com



Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information

Newsletter submissions: RailtownNews@parks.ca.gov

(all area codes are 209)

Kim Baker , Park Superintendent	984-4622	kbaker@parks.ca.gov
George Sapp , Railroad Restoration Lead Worker (DSLE)	774-6368	gsapp@parks.ca.gov
Kevin Zimmerman , Asst. Railroad Operations Manager	557-0294	kzimmerman@parks.ca.gov
Lisa Smithson , State Park Curator I (DER)	984-3119	lsmithson@parks.ca.gov
Ryan Richelson , Maintenance Supervisor	984-3115	rrichelson@parks.ca.gov
Rob Buchanan , Park Maintenance Worker I	984-3115	rbuchanan@parks.ca.gov
Danny Taylor , Park Maintenance Assistant	984-3115	dtaylor@parks.ca.gov
Dave Rainwater , Park Aid & Volunteer Coordinator	984-4408	darainwater@parks.ca.gov
Kevin Zimmerman , Engine Crew Caller	557-0294	kzimmerman@parks.ca.gov
Ron White , Stationmaster and Asst. Crew Caller for Car Hosts	551-7087	rbarryw@att.net
Carl Rudolph , Crew Caller Fire Patrol	586-9905	cakr@sonnet.com
Laverne Coon , Special Decorations and Ticket Agent Caller	984-4408	

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